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SPEECH OF
HON. JOHN SHERMAN,

AT THE RATIFICATION MEETING,

Wednesday Night, June 21, 1871.

The preliminary work is now complete. The Convention to-day has been distinguished for its numbers, ability and character. You have had more than the usual diversity of opinions as to candidates. Some feeling of disappointment is inevitable, but on the whole every delegate will feel that he has been fairly treated, and that he can now support the ticket, the whole ticket, and nothing but the ticket; not that it is just as he wishes, but that it has been fairly made by one of the ablest conventions that ever assembled in Ohio. We all feel, too, that organization is indispensable to success in every movement, great or small.

The matters involved in this election not only reach to every department of our State Government, but will affect the apportionment of our State and the revision of our Constitution. It will affect you in the National Councils, and will be a decisive sign to the great Presidential contest of 1872. It is therefore a matter of pride and satisfaction to see the Republican party of Ohio, with its glorious history and proud record, enter into this canvass with a ticket worthy its support, with its principles sanctified by great success, ready to enter upon new reforms and able to carry them out.

And we enter upon our canvass with one satisfaction that does not often fall to the fate of a party. We have the indorsement and approval of our political adversaries. We have administered the Government of the United States and of this State, for now ten years. We have had many contests, in war and in peace—contests involving great changes in our Government—contests political and administrative.

We have realized the original idea of the founders of our Government—a central government, supreme in its limited powers, surrounded and supported by thirty-seven local State Governments—and all now moving on in harmony. We have emancipated four millions of slaves. We have secured, by the highest constitutional sanctions, the liberty and equality of all citizens before the law. We have administered our internal affairs so that our credit is untarnished, our industry is prosperous, our Territories are forming into States, new railroads are building, old disputes are dying away, and nothing is needed on the part of the Government but the fair enforcement of the Constitution and laws for the protection of persons and property. We have so managed our internal affairs, and have so borne ourselves with foreign nations, that we have now no dispute or controversy with any nation of the world, and our strength and power have been so demonstrated that we need not fear that any nation will desire a contest with us. The theory and principle of a republican government is so strengthened by our example as everywhere to enlarge the powers entrusted to the people. Even the poor negro—emancipated by our laws and clothed with political power—is recognized by our old Democratic adversaries as a man and a brother.

I congratulate you that we have now, in Ohio at least, the formal approval of the great distinguishing measures of Republican policy, by the recent convention of Democratic politicians here in Columbus. They tell us that they recognize as accomplished facts the three amendments to the Constitution, and they pledge themselves to the full and faithful enforcement of the Constitution as it now is, so as to secure equal rights to all persons under it, without distinction of race, color or condition. So far well. It is a great matter to secure even a formal acquiescence in constitutional changes, especially when they involve the rights of millions of people, and when they have been so steadily opposed in all stages by the Democratic party, North and South. They were the issues of the war. They were the issues since the war. They were mainly the issues of the last Presidential campaign. Opposition to them was the starch, the uniting element of the Democratic party. Where would they have been without the hate of the negro? What bond holds the mass of the people of the South to the Democratic party but negrophobia? Where will Kentucky be without this tie? Her old affinities were not with the Democratic party. Where will be that great mass of honest but mistaken men, who feared the effect upon our institutions of the citizenship of emancipated slaves? Where will be that other class of Democrats, whose only political idea was founded upon prejudice against and hate of

negroes, and who, in the mobs of New York, and in organized mobs of the South, hunted down, whipped and murdered negroes to prevent them from exercising either civil or political rights, and who whipped, scourged and murdered white men and women, too, for educating and being friends of the negro race? What will Jeff. Davis say, who, though his life was fairly forfeited by his treason, yet commands influence over more votes in the South than we have Democrats in Ohio? What will the large minority of Ohio Democrats say who protested in the Convention against acquiescing in the amendments? Still, in spite of all this uncertainty, it is a glorious fact, of which every Republican may be proud, that a majority of the Democrats of Ohio acquiesce in the great measures we have brought about—promise obedience to them and enforcement of them, and beg of us no longer to consider them as political issues before the country.

We would have greater cause for rejoicing if we did not see so many reasons for regarding this new departure as a Trojan Horse—a new device of the enemy to steal into our camp and betray our cause. What do they mean by denouncing the extraordinary means by which the amendments were brought about? The only means by which the amendments could be adopted was by a vote of two-thirds of each House of Congress, ratified by three-fourths of the States. Was this consent given? If so, the amendments are the supreme law. Do they dispute the fact? If not, why this back-handed lick at what they ratify and agree to enforce? Again: What do they mean by vigorously applying the Democratic rule of strict construction to the amendments? Does this conceal some covert purpose to defeat them? Is this a new Kentucky resolution of '98 containing the heresy of Secession and Nullification? The 14th amendment is, mainly, only the true interpretation of the old Constitution, but the vital principles and guarantees of the old Constitution were nullified by strict construction, or rather by false construction. Hence the necessity of the 14th amendment, which defines who are citizens, what are the rights of a citizen, and specifically give Congress the power to enforce them by appropriate legislation. If Calhoun's doctrine of strict construction is to be revived to defeat the amendments, then nothing is settled. What we mean is, that these amendments are the logical results of a great civil war which brushed from our atmosphere all taint of slavery, secession and Calhounism; that they shall have their full operation according to the plain meaning of English words, and that Congress shall, from time to time, pass laws to enforce them; and that the President shall execute these laws fully and efficiently, subject only to the judicial power of the Courts of the United States. If

that is what they mean by the new departure, it is all right. If not, it is a mere political trick, too shallow to mislead or deceive any one.

Again: What do they mean by their fifth resolution? Is it the mere naked axiom that acts passed by Congress are subject to repeal? If so, why pompously utter what all admit? But the context shows that they mean a repeal of all the acts passed to enforce the amendments. The amendments without the appropriate legislation are mere dogmas without inherent power of enforcement. The ten commandments are laws of the highest sanction, but what are they worth without penalties and punishments? What good does it do to say, thou shalt not murder, unless the law comes in and says, if thou dost murder, thou shalt surely be put to death or be imprisoned? What use is it to say that all men shall have equal political and civil rights, unless the law punishes a violation of these rights? What does this new departure mean, except to say, we recognize the amendments, but we will repeal the laws that enforce them? We had many rights secured by the Constitution as it was that were plainly and openly nullified. The citizens of any one of the States had all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States, and yet for years a citizen of the North could not and

did not enjoy his rights in the South.

Judge Hoar, of Massachusetts, was expelled from South Carolina for the mere effort to appeal to the courts of South Carolina for protection from illegal imprisonment of a citizen of Massachusetts. The Democratic party, by what they call strict construction, and by their refusal to pass appropriate laws, stripped the Constitution of half its vitality. Do they wish in the same way to emasculate these amendments? Does any sensible man believe that a Democratic Congress could or would pass any law to enforce any of these amendments? Every effort of ours to enforce them has been met by the most violent parliamentary opposition, and the laws have been resisted by organized violence.

Now they tell us they will repeal the laws, and yet they recognize the amendments. They believe in the Maine Liquor Law, but are opposed to its enforcement. They confess their sins but will surely repeat them.

The new departure is a good enough Morgan until after the election, and then their platform is loose enough for them all to creep through and follow their old course of hate, persecution and violence. While these tricks are played upon us here, the mass of the Democratic voters in the South are waiting and watching—not over the border—but in the heart of our country, to restore the lost cause—to upset all that we have gained in the last ten years.

It is only necessary to read the Democratic journals both in Ohio and in other States to show that this new departure is only to shield themselves behind some jugglery about the construction of the amendments and the mode of their enforcement. The essential modifications made in the convention of the Dayton resolutions gives color to this idea, and the whole, as they stand in the platform, look like a bad mixing of opposing ideas.

They felt that the public voice demanded that these amendments must be ratified and indorsed by their party, and yet they did not want to do it. They did it with an if—and a damn—and a slap—with several loop-holes of escape—with many antidotes—and in bad temper generally. The dose was objectionable to many, but they took it and have not felt well since. And now nothing could be more ludicrous in political strategy—if it were not dangerous—than to trust the Democratic party with the enforcement of these amendments. Better give the lamb to the wolf than either the blacks of the South, or the loyal people of the South, to the Democratic party of either the North or South. The Democratic party of the North would be powerless to execute their pledge. The same men who broke that party at Charleston, the same men who sacrificed Douglass, the same men who covered our land with the graves of patriot soldiers, would, by virtue of their majority, seize the power of the Democratic organization; and where, then, would be the amendments, or the protection of loyal people, white or black, or the public's honor as represented by the pension list and the public creditors? From the logic of affinities and the association of names and events, it is evident that no sincere movement to enforce the amendments can ever be executed by the Democratic party. Noisy crowds that hail with enthusiasm the treasonable utterances of Jeff. Davis—the bands of midnight Democratic outlaws who make night hideous in the South by murder and nameless crimes, without danger or fear of punishment—clearly show that the Democratic party of the South can not yet be trusted with political power; while the uncertain, evasive and divided voice of the Democratic party of the North—with policy pulling one way and principle another—with the politicians preaching the new gospel of a new departure, and the instincts and prejudices of the masses still opposed—with its spoken utterances, like Delphic oracles, paltering in a double sense—in such a condition the Democratic party of the North is utterly unfit to assume any responsibility in the Government except its old role of fault-finding; of opposing what we do; of proposing nothing; of voting against everything—even the English Treaty—in hopes that something will turn up.

Test the Democratic party by what it has done where it has been in power recently. What good did its temporary majority in the Legislature of Ohio do the people of Ohio? It pledged reform, and yet increased the State expenditures in every branch of the service, and largely increased local taxes. What has it done in New York, and especially in the city, where, under Tammany influence, there is established the most scandalous and corrupt municipal government in the world? What can it do for the future of this country? Here is a string of fifteen resolutions, and there is not a single affirmative proposition in them upon which the Democratic party could stand united, except the one demanding amnesty to Davis, Toombs, and the rebels of the South. The first seven resolutions they call the new departure. They remind one of the famous group of bronze horses at Milan. They appear eager to depart in every direction, but, go nowhere. They tell us that they hold good to the old Democratic doctrine of annexation of territory, but are opposed to the acquiring of San Domingo. They pretend to be for hard money, but propose to issue an unlimited amount of greenbacks. They pretend respect for the laws and the courts, and they propose to disregard not only the solemn pledges of our loan laws, but the decision of the Supreme Court, in order to cheat the public creditors. They declare their opposition to the national banking system, but propose nothing to take its place. In their wild and blind opposition they would destroy the best system of currency we have ever had, merely because it was established by the Republican party. Though the first commercial nations of the world are applauding it and following our example, though Governor Chase, now one of their candidates, fathered it and supports it, though no man has lost a dollar as the holder of a national bank note, yet they would derange all the business of the country by uprooting the system, merely because there is supposed to be virtue in a party cry against banks. They talk about a revenue tariff and wise tax laws, and yet no member of their party in Congress ever proposed either, but oppose every measure offered by us. When we repeal eighty millions of taxes, they vote against it. When we devise new guards against fraud, they vote against them. They talk about economy, and yet they vote for every extravagant expenditure. They would load us down with rebel losses in the war. They seize upon every popular cry—here one thing, and there another. In Ohio it is greenbacks; in New York it is specie payments; in Pennsylvania it is protection; here it is a new departure; in the South it is perpetual war against the amendments and death to the negro. With the Irish it is Fenianism. In Kentucky it is the Resolutions of

'98, slightly revised. With Jeff. Davis and his powerful followers it is discord, war and dis-union.

Let any impartial man look over the whole field of National and State politics—let him look at the dangerous elements comprising that party—let him consider what they would probably do if placed in power—let him combine in one cauldron all the ingredients, and say upon his oath is it wise and politic yet to turn over to the Democratic party the administration of the affairs of a great nation like ours?

When, on the other hand, we turn to the great political organization to which we belong, we may find shadows and clouds, but the general policy of the Republican party has been elevating, manly and successful. Above all, we have extended to all our inhabitants liberty and equality before the courts and the law in civil and political rights. Our policy has strengthened the power of the nation without sacrificing the rights of the States. The increased powers of the Nation all inure to the benefit of the individual citizen, for the sole object of it all is to enable us to protect the citizen from local injustice and outrage.

We have a strong Government, whose wide-reaching hand shields and protects the humblest citizen, and yet the power of the State to educate and foster—to protect and encourage—to punish and reward all its citizens, is unimpaired. We have now such a Union as George Washington described in his Farewell Address, with nothing to threaten it but the decaying embers of the Rebellion. We need to pass no resolutions to assure any one that we will stand by and enforce the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments. We proposed them; we advocated them, and, while supported by the people, will enforce them. That we have been liberal to vanquished foes, is shown by the fact that, after waging a war of unexampled proportions, no blood was shed for political offenses. No property has been confiscated. Many of the leading rebels are now protected in the secure enjoyment of large estates, and show their gratitude for our generosity by hissing on disguised murderers and outlaws to the murder and scourging of poor negroes and preachers and teachers. We conferred franchises upon millions, but we deprived no one of any right they had before the war, except only that we forbade, for a time, the leading rebels, of the South from holding office. This was the extent of our punishment. I have been disposed to pardon even this, but after recent developments I will not vote to relieve from any disability such men as Davis and Tombs who are totally incapable of appreciating generosity. I never questioned the justice of excluding these

men from office; but I would, if their conduct would ever allow it, make our treatment of them so generous and forgiving, that history never could surpass it. The Republican party from its very nature could not be cruel or aggressive. We have so many humanitarians among us that they often demand amnesty when punishment is required. We fought for the liberty of others, and for the union of all, and could not logically deprive any one of either liberty or civil or political rights, except as the public safety clearly demanded it. If we have erred, it has been in underrating the power of these rebels and the danger that may come from them. The Republican party has excelled the generosity of the Girondists, and has exhibited none of the fury of the Mountain. All our measures since the war, and the amendments are the most important, were aimed to secure personal rights. The additional powers given to Congress by the amendments are only to enable Congress to enforce these rights, and to give pardon to the rebels. They talk about the Bayonet Bill and the Ku-Klux Bill. These bills were demanded by organized resistance to fair elections, and to punish crimes of the most revolting character against the commonest rights of humanity. If they are not sufficient, we will give them others. The difference is that they would encourage these crimes. We try to prevent and punish them. If they will restrain their fellow Democrats of the South from murder and organized frauds, we will repeal these laws. If not, we will pass more effective laws.

On the question of finance, we need no resolutions to show where we stand. The whole existing system of financial legislation is the work of the Republican party. During the war we were driven by our necessities to provide a currency. We gave you the Greenbacks and the National Bank Notes. The Greenbacks were a forced loan. We did not, in the beginning, intend to exceed in amount the sum we could maintain at a specie standard; but our necessities left us no choice. We increased them to a dangerous extent, but we supported their credit by the legal tender clause, and by the right to convert them into interest-bearing bonds. We have, since the war, sought to improve their credit, to bring them nearer and nearer to the standard of gold. During the two years of this administration, we have raised their value from 69 cents on the dollar to 91 cents on the dollar—and this without contraction, distress, panic or financial revulsion. If left alone, we will, in two years more, bring them to the standard of gold. We had two dangers to avoid: **FIRST**—An increase and consequent depreciation of these notes;

and SECOND—A too sudden contraction of currency, and the inevitable distress and ruin to those in business or in debt. We could sooner have resumed specie payments by redeeming a portion of the greenbacks, but we would thus have changed the standard of value and increased the burden of debt. We have avoided both extremes. We have maintained in circulation the maximum limit of greenbacks, and increased their value by the natural growth of our business and population, and by the public confidence in our policy. The Democratic party threaten to subvert this policy. In Ohio they would increase the greenbacks—in the east they would redeem them, and force, abruptly, specie payments. Disagreeing among themselves, they agree to subvert our wise policy, and in their platforms threaten again to open the question of paying the bonds in greenbacks. Our policy will soon make greenbacks and gold the common standard of all values and debts; and if this policy succeeds in the future as in the past, our country will present the unexampled spectacle of recovering from the vast expenditures of a war without discredit—without dishonor and without a single wave of financial panic. In human life the most prosperous and healthy man is rarely contented with his fate; but surely our nation should be satisfied with its financial prosperity under the greatest difficulties ever overcome by a people.

As to our banking system, it was but the choice of expedients, and was a happy choice. It subverted an incongruous hotch-pot of State Banks, founded upon the laws of thirty-seven different States, without security, without uniform value, of local circulation, and endangered by a swarm of counterfeits. These State Banks were spawn of the extreme doctrine of State Rights. If anything should be national, it should be bank notes. They are the blood of the system, and should flow freely through the system. A centralized bank, like the old Bank of the United States, was dangerous from its unity and power. It was managed by a few who were encouraged to use their power for political ends. Our present banks are a unit only in their security, form and circulation. They can not combine. When carefully supervised and regulated by law, and well distributed, they form the most convenient financial agents of the people. In comparison with the old State Banks, they are preferable in every respect. The only question that can arise in the future, about the National Banks, is whether notes issued directly by the Government, and redeemable by the Government, may not supercede the necessity of bank notes.

This would save to the people the interest on the circulating notes. So far, good. Their credit depends mainly upon the security of the Government, and the Government should

share in the profit. But, on the contrary, the general objects of a Government are not consistent with other necessary functions of a bank. The operation of loaning and redeeming notes can not safely be performed by Government agents. It must be done by private parties, personally interested. Government banks could not be properly distributed. Even offices of redemption are subject to many dangers. Without going into details upon this subject, we can safely follow all modern experience by leaving the business of banking, like other business, to the free and interested agency of private citizens. The function of the Government is fully exhausted when it secures the absolute safety of the note-holder, when it prints, in the best form and devices, the bank note, and then leaves the private parties, without favor, the circulation and the redemption of the notes. This is the basis of our present system, and the United States shares in the profit by an annual tax of nine millions, and the States and municipal corporations in another tax of nine millions, while the people enjoy local facilities, unquestioned security, freedom from counterfeits, and the uniform credit and value of the note in every part of our wide extended country. With this admirable system, I, for one, am not disposed to interfere except to cure such defects as may appear in its practical workings.

The policy of the Republican party in levying taxes is also shown by what we have done. During the war it was money that we wanted, and from all sources and quarters. We were fighting for national life, and we took where we could take easiest, and the people sustained us in it. But from the close of the war to this hour, we have been reducing taxes. Each Congress has relieved the people from taxes. Most of our internal taxes levied during the war are now repealed. The last Congress threw off fifty-six millions of such taxes. At the next session of Congress the whole system will go by the board, except the taxes on spirits, beer and tobacco, and perhaps a few stamps. Those that remain will be simplified so that the tax-gatherer need only look to the distilleries and breweries. Taxes on imported goods must now, as before the war, be the main reliance of the Government, and even these, I promise you, we will reduce to the extent of at least twenty millions, and as much more as our necessary expenditures will justify. The articles upon which this reduction will be made will be the subject of long dispute. The mere catch-phrases with which platform makers tickle and deceive will not answer in this work. It is a practical duty, and the only test will be to reduce or repeal those that bear most heavily upon the people.

My official duty requires me to think of these questions a good deal, and I shall, without evasion, in the coming can-

vass, enter into details. It is now sufficient for me to say that I am utterly opposed to continuing, at a high rate, the taxes on articles of prime necessity, in common use among all our people, merely to be able to reduce the taxes on those articles which enter into competition with our own industry. Nor is it wise, by protection laws, to force our home industry into unnatural channels. A reduction of duties on necessities, large duties on luxuries, and average duties on articles competing with our own; this is the general idea which, in my opinion, should guide us in reducing our tariff, and they surely will guide me. Under our present tariff laws, all departments of mechanical industry have sprung into healthy life, diversifying our products, consuming our farm products, and extending our railroads.

I am for the reduction of taxes by the repeal or modification of all that are excessive, but I am not in favor of following any wild theories of political economists, to the destruction of any home industry, or to the diminution of our revenue so as to endanger a deficiency.

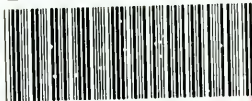
It is a charming business to repeal taxes, but we must remember that by taxes alone we have been able to pay off fully eight hundred millions of floating debt and claims since the war was over. We have also paid off, since the war, nearly five hundred millions of the funded debt. Since General Grant was inaugurated, we have paid off two hundred and thirty millions of the bonded debt, and thus saved fourteen millions of annual interest in gold. We are also diminishing the interest on that which remains unpaid. Our financial condition is now so assured, that after all the strain of the war, our credit is now better than before the war. The debt is no longer the mountain that threatens to overthrow us. Our expenditures, our taxes and our debt, are all rapidly diminishing, while our population, our resources, our wealth, and our industry, are all rapidly increasing. Such is the result of a Republican Administration. In what respect can the Democratic party improve this condition of things?

Such is now our financial condition that we can make a careful balance of accounts, we can tell very nearly what any given tax will produce, we can estimate accurately our expenditures, and may limit our taxes to the bare sums necessary to fulfill our loan laws, and meet our necessary expenditures. Our taxes may now safely be reduced to this extent, for now the people may be sure that under this policy the debt will be constantly diminishing, and the taxes be periodically lessened. It is the glory of General Grant's administration that, with the reduction of taxes and debt, we have also a large reduction of expenditures. The army was largely reduced by the last Congress; the civil service is diminishing

in every branch of the service, except the postal service, which necessarily increases with the growth of the country, and the number of employes is lessening, and now we have, to crown other reforms, a movement that will bring about civil service reform. A committee of practical men are now framing, under the authority of law, a series of regulations to secure efficiency in civil service, and to protect faithful officers from arbitrary removal. I never doubted the power of Congress to regulate the duration of office and the causes for removal. I therefore voted for the tenure-of-office act, but every Democrat voted against it, alleging it was unconstitutional. Now they resolve in favor of Civil Service Reform, and denounce us for not bringing it about. All the evils complained of had their origin in the precepts and practice of Democratic Administrations. "To the victors belong the spoils," was their cry, and the amount of spoils according to political service, was their rule. No doubt all parties will choose from among political friends for political offices; but the tenure of their offices, the causes of their removal and the requisite qualifications, should all be fixed by regulations with the form and sanction of law. Without such regulations the army and navy would be unorganized mobs. How far this system may be established in the civil service, is one of the problems this Administration will solve with the hearty concurrence of the President and Congress. In the whole round of political and social life there is not one single reform, progress or advance that may not be entrusted with more safety to the Republican party than any other. Gen. Grant has fulfilled every promise he has made you. He is executing the laws as well as it is possible for any one to do. He follows, rather than leads, public opinion, and does not in any way force a policy upon the people against their will. His military success broke the power of our enemies, and his civil administration is marked with prosperity. Let us, then, enter upon this canvass with active confidence, ready to reason with our adversaries—to gather wisdom from opposition; but with a proper appreciation of the merits of our cause and party. We have now a ticket, carefully selected, of gentlemen worthy of your choice. Upon the election will depend a General Assembly, the election of a United States Senator, and of the most important State Legislation. More than all, the maintenance of Republican principles in the administration of the National Government will be greatly affected by our election.

Ohio often speaks for the whole country, and I hope will do so now.

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